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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

This report contains information on the organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference, its agenda, and programme of work

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 48/188 of 21 December 1993, decided to convene the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in 1994 with the following objectives:

a) To review the accomplishments of the Decade at national, regional and international levels;

b) To chart a programme for action for the future

c) To exchange information on the implementation of Decade programmes and policies;

d) To increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies.

2. The General Assembly, in the same resolution, accepted with deep appreciation the generous offer of Japan to host the Conference and decided that the Conference will be held in Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994. At the same time, the Assembly established a Preparatory Committee, to meet at Geneva not later than March 1994 for five days to perform the following tasks, on the basis of recommendations submitted by the Secretariat of the Decade, after consultation with the host country:

a) Review organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference;

b) Approve the Programme of work of the Conference;

c) Propose Rules of procedure for adoption by the Conference.

3. General Assembly resolution 48/188 also requested that the Secretariat of the Decade serve as the Secretariat of the Conference and coordinate preparatory activities in close cooperation with the host Government and the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, with the full support of relevant departments and offices of the United Nations Secretariat. The IDNDR Secretariat has accordingly prepared the following proposals which

address both organizational and substantive aspects of the World Conference. These proposals were developed taking into account indications from a broad range of participants in IDNDR and after consultation with the host country.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL PREPARATIONS

A. Participation in the Conference

4. Keeping in line with its previous decisions on participation in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (resolutions 42/169 and 44/236), the General Assembly decided that participation in the Conference should be broad and multidisciplinary and accordingly requested the Secretary-General to invite all States, National Committees for the Decade, organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as concerned intergovernmental organizations and scientific associations, relevant non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Invitations are being sent to prospective participants in the Conference, based on their known activities in the various aspects of disaster reduction and on relevant information received from a variety of sources worldwide.

5. The decision to hold the World Conference, which was first made by the General Assembly in resolution 46/169 of 1991, has stimulated a very encouraging response from all sectors which leads to believe that the Conference will attract a broad and dynamic presence of a multidisciplinary nature. To this end, crucial factors will be the extent of preparatory and promotional activities undertaken at the national, regional and sectoral levels and the dissemination of information about the Conference, its programme, objectives and the expected exchange of information. It is important to make the best use of the short time available at Yokohama and to ensure that participants take an active part in the discussions and in the exchange of knowledge, the review of existing and planned disaster reduction programmes and in developing further the international and regional programmes for disaster reduction.

6. The international and local non-governmental organizations working in the sectors of development, disaster relief, environment, research and training have an important role to play in the promotion of natural disaster reduction at regional,

national and local level. However, as the involvement of development and relief non-governmental organizations in the Decade has been so far limited, their participation in the World Conference is critical for raising the awareness of their potential role in the field of natural disaster reduction and integration with the development process.

7. International and national non-governmental organizations have been informed of the World Conference, offered the possibility to participate and requested to submit their applications. At the same time non-governmental organizations are encouraged to liaise with the national IDNDR committees in their respective countries. Document A/CONF.172/PC/L.3 contains the

proposed criteria for participation of non-governmental organizations and a first list of non-governmental organizations to be invited to the Conference as of 14 February 1994. Applications coming later, that meet the criteria for participation approved by the Preparatory Committee, will be accepted by the Secretariat of the Conference bearing in mind General Assembly decisions on the Decade.

B. Agenda, structure and programme of work of the Conference

8. In order to meet the objectives given by the General Assembly, the agenda, structure and programme of work of the World Conference are planned to maximize the exchange of information and the discussions among participants coming from many sectors of activity from all over the world. Document A/CONF.172/PC/L.4 contains the draft provisional agenda and proposed programme of work of the Conference which will include:

a) Plenary meetings where Governments and National Committee representatives will present national disaster reduction policies and plans for international cooperation in disaster mitigation;

b) Main Committee meetings for the presentation and discussion of Regional Reports and the specific topic of Public and Private Sector Interface, which is one of the distinct features of IDNDR;

c) Technical Committees organized with the objectives of allowing an expanded review and analysis of specific topics particularly relevant to disaster reduction.

9. Such a broadly articulated programme can be organized thanks to a joint cooperative approach coordinated by the IDNDR Secretariat with the participation of United Nations programmes and

specialized agencies and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. As described in detail in the Programme of work for the Conference, meetings of the Main Committee and of Technical Committees are organized by one or more organizations and will feature key-note presentations by disaster management authorities, well-known scientists and leading international and national experts on disaster mitigation, allowing also time for discussions among the participants. It is expected that each Committee will have a Chairman, a Rapporteur and discussion coordinators, who will ensure that the outcome and salient points will be reported to the Plenary and incorporated in the outcome of the Conference.

C. General Committee

10. The broad and multidisciplinary participation emphasized by the Assembly for the IDNDR and the World Conference should also guide the composition of the General Committee. It is expected that the host Government will suggest a leading personality as President of the Conference, who could be assisted by Vice-Presidents and a Rapporteur-general; the General Committee would be completed by the Chairpersons and Rapporteurs of the Main and Technical Committees, elected to reflect both the geographic and the specific areas of competence of the Conference participants, and by the Secretary-General of the Conference. The General Committee, keeping with past practice at international meetings, will advise the President on the conduct of the Conference. The draft Rules of Procedure (document A/CONF.172/PC/L.1) specify the functions of the organs of the Conference.

11. The Conference may establish a Drafting Group charged with the mandate of preparing the outcome of the Conference. Its composition would allow for the participation of the countries and different sectors of society represented at the Conference to ensure that its output is balanced, visionary and authoritive, respond to the aims of the Conference and provides a significant contribution for the Mid-term review of the IDNDR which is to take place at the 1994 session of the Economic and Social Council.

D. Documentation for the Conference

12. The Conference documentation should also serve the purpose of reaching the objectives established by the General Assembly, maximizing substantive aspects. The documentation will provide information and analysis on national, regional and sectoral

activities in disaster mitigation. The list of documents can be found in document A/CONF.172/PC/Inf.1.

E. Administrative and financial arrangements

13. The official invitation by the Government of Japan to host the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction was extended to the Secretary-General during the Second Session of the Special High-Level Council of IDNDR in New York on 25 January 1993 and accepted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/188. Following the consultations held at Geneva in September 1993 with representatives from the Government of Japan and the City of Yokohama and subsequent discussions, a draft Agreement was prepared by the IDNDR Secretariat in line with General Assembly guidelines for the Decade. It was cleared by the Legal Office of the United Nations. It stipulates that the additional costs

deriving from holding the Conference in Yokohama rather than in Geneva will be borne by the host country.

14. The preparations for the World Conference pose a considerably heavy work load for the IDNDR Secretariat, which the General Assembly decided would serve as Secretariat for the Conference, "with the full support of relevant departments and offices of the United Nations Secretariat". It is indeed necessary to perform a large number of activities, both organizational and substantive, in a short time, given the date of the Conference. Therefore, additional staff and resources were requested[1]. So far the scarce resources available have not permitted to meet these requirements and the Secretariat is endeavouring to carry out its tasks with the additional professional staff whose services are offered by the following organizations: one part-time professional from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to liaise with the non-governmental organizations, one part-time professional from World Health Organization (WHO) to assist in Public Information and relations with the media, one full-time Senior Expert from World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to be responsible for the organization of the Conference. Up to date information on the financial aspects of the Conference will be given at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

15. On 30 November 1993, the Under-Secretary-General for

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[1] General Assembly document A/C.2/48/L.62 (Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.24)

Humanitarian Affairs addressed an appeal to member countries for contributions to help cover the increased operational costs incurred by the preparations for the Conference.

16. Success of the World Conference depends on as large as possible participation from developing countries. As it has been the case in respect of previous United Nations conferences, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 1994), arrangements have been made for receiving voluntary contributions from member countries to support the costs of participation of representatives from various sectors of society from developing countries. Keeping in line with the broad and multidisciplinary participation in the Conference, it would be appropriate to facilitate the participation of representatives from governments, national IDNDR committees and the scientific and private sectors, i.e. to try to provide support to representatives from developing countries. Pledges for this purpose have already been received

from several countries, and specialized agencies have also offered financial support.

F. Informal meetings

17. The Secretariat of the Decade held two informal meetings, on 10 December 1993 with representatives of Permanent Missions from potential donor countries, to make an appeal to support the attendance at the Conference of delegations from developing countries; and on 12 January 1994 with representatives of a number of Permanent Missions at Geneva to report on the preparatory activities, to designate a Bureau for the Preparatory Committee, to discuss financing the participation of representatives from developing countries and to seek guidance from the participants as to the possible outcome of the Conference.

G. Other meetings

Special High Level Council (SHLC)

18. The IDNDR Special High Level Council held a meeting in New York 25 January 1993, with the UN Secretary General attending and addressing the meeting. SHLC adopted a "12-point programme towards the World Conference". The individual SHLC members have supported the conference preparations.

Scientific and Technical Committee (STC)

19. The IDNDR Scientific and Technical Committee has played a crucial role in the conference preparations. STC, early on, established a Preparatory Group, which has shaped the Conference technical programme, and has been in constant communication with the IDNDR Secretariat. The Preparatory Group has attended the meetings of the Inter-Agency Working Group, and held a meeting together with the representatives of the host country and the Agencies in September 1993 in Geneva, as well as 5-6 November in Tokyo/Yokohama, also visiting the Conference facilities. The Chairman of the STC Preparatory Group, together with the Chairman of STC, are frequently consulted by the IDNDR Secretariat on programme development.

Inter-Agency Coordination

20. The Inter-Agency Working Group of the Steering Committee, established before the beginning of the Decade, has been reactivated, and has played an important role in the coordination of the technical programme development for the Conference.

Several UN and other Agencies have assumed the responsibility to organize and finance the programme for the Main and Technical Committees at the Conference, or to organize and coordinate the scientific and technical poster sessions and exhibition.

21. The IDNDR Secretariat has organized Inter-Agency Working Group meetings on 13 April 1993, 18 June 1993, 13-15 September 1993, 8-9 February 1994. The Working Group has also participated in the IDNDR/STC meeting 23-25 November 1993.

H. Planning mission

22. A planning mission visited Tokyo and Yokohama from 17 to 21 January 1994, led by the Director of IDNDR Secretariat and officials from the Headquarters of the United Nations and the United Nations Office at Geneva. The purpose was:

a) To discuss the financial arrangements with the Japanese Authorities and the organization of the Conference;

b) To have discussions with the Mayor of Yokohama City on the organization of the Conference;

c) To visit the Pacifico Convention Centre where the Conference will be held to ascertain that the facilities offered meet UN requirements;

d) To assess security needs and meet with national and local law enforcement officials responsible for overall security of the Conference and participants;

e) To meet with national and local broadcast and print media to plan coverage of the Conference;

f) To make arrangements for logistic matters such as hotel accommodation, transport, etc.

A follow-up mission will be sent to Yokohama to finalize the arrangements for the Conference, probably in April 1994.

III. SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS

23. Throughout the world, expectations generated by the convening of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction have stimulated progress and accelerated development taking place in the various components of the framework of the International

Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Information available shows that there has been, however, a varying degree of progress, depending on the actual level of awareness, resources available and on the capability of IDNDR participants to take initiatives towards vulnerability reduction in their countries, regions or locations. Successful tackling of hazards requires participation of institutions and individuals not yet active in disaster reduction.

A. National disaster reduction programmes

24. The World Conference is more and more perceived as the next big event ahead. News about convening of the Conference and the request made by the UN to all countries to prepare, for presentation at Yokohama, national reports on disaster mitigation have been a stimulating factor for countries to take stock of their situation in respect of disaster vulnerability and to bring to surface the whole dimension of the problem. In fact not only countries which are already participating in the IDNDR, but also a large number of other countries, will provide substantial reporting to the World Conference.

25. Even if reports on national activities for natural disaster reduction will not be received from all the 130 countries formally participating in the IDNDR, the World Conference will provide for the first time a global account of disaster mitigation activities

implemented and planned. Through the joint efforts of STC members, the IDNDR Secretariat, donors and permanent missions to the UN, participation in the World Conference will result in strengthening of disaster reduction activities and in increased backing for those National IDNDR Committees which have not obtained strong support from government authorities. By the end of February, the IDNDR Secretariat will have received national reports from more than 70 countries. In this respect it is worth mentioning that small developing countries made considerable efforts in compiling the reports involving all agencies and organizations engaged in national disaster reduction.

B. Economic aspects of disaster reduction and the development impact

26. The full dimension of the adverse impact of disasters in today's world is more and more evident. Not only disasters have an extremely high cost in human lives, as in the Central India earthquake, but the financial costs and economic impact, as in the USA due to Hurricane Andrew and the recent Los Angeles earthquake, keep increasing. Many observers are focusing their attention on the economic fallout of disasters. In fact, natural

disasters are now recognized as major obstacles on the path to development and as capable of affecting the economic performance of industrial countries. Recent studies carried out in the USA tried to measure the influence of disasters on macroeconomic indicators.

27. From the business sector point of view, there are growing difficulties in the world re-insurance industry, where capability to cover hazards is shrinking over the years, owing to a series of increasing financial losses. In this field, fast remedial action is required on the part of the industry itself and the public authorities, to control and reverse the decline of this tool for the reduction of the economic costs of disasters. The statistics of the Munich Reinsurance Company indicate total losses of US$ 60 billion in 1992, compared with US$ 41 billion in 1991. These figures speak for themselves.

28. Insurers as well as manufacturers and service providers are paying increasing attention to disaster reduction; the business sector is not only developing technologies and equipment for disaster reduction, it is also a source of valuable examples of preparedness in respect of their own operations and plants. Therefore, the IDNDR Secretariat is stepping up efforts to involve the business sector in Decade activities: a Working Group has identified specific activities as part of a Framework for Co-operation with the private sector. From a different angle, co-

operation and coordination among public authorities, the business sector and NGOs is one of the means to achieve effective prevention. The World Conference Main Committee and the Technical Committees will reflect this new focus.

C. Integration of disaster prevention and environmental policies with sustainable development

29. The proclamation of the Decade has stimulated better understanding of the importance of achieving a higher level of safety from all directions. An important contribution in this direction is provided by the availability of more information on the full impact of hazards and environmental imbalances in economic terms. Even the most advanced countries, like the US, are now measuring the impact of natural and environmental disasters in GNP terms. This is an encouraging step, as it balances the focus from the phenomena at the origin of potentially damaging events, to their impact in terms of human and physical losses and to the causes for these losses, which in fact are seldom the events alone, but rather the vulnerability of what mankind has built.

30. In this area, the recent International Round Table organized by the German Foundation for International Development (Berlin, 25-28 January 1994) cleared the field and provided focus on the implications of integrating disaster reduction policies and sustainable development. The International Round Table on Disaster Mitigation and Prevention policies for Sustainable Development contributed to the identification of activities, progress and deficiencies, observed during the first half of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is evident that more focus on policy aspects of the correlation between disaster mitigation and sustainable development and recognizing that further consolidation is needed at national level in order to achieve a better understanding of its relevance. The conclusions of the International Round Table are available at the IDNDR Secretariat.

31. Time has come to concentrate efforts towards better comprehension of the vital role national, regional and international activities in disaster mitigation and prevention have to play in safeguarding sustainable development and environmental protection worldwide.

32. It was realized that the level of vulnerability to disasters is relative to the state of development. The increasing problems of environmental degradation, urban migration, mega-cities, technological hazards and complex emergencies aggravate the

situation and make the burden of disasters a major cause for concern. Disaster-prone societies are not necessarily limited to developing countries though these remain the most vulnerable.

33. The findings and recommendations of the Round Table address the following topics:

1. Disaster reduction and development policies

2. Awareness, advocacy, education and training

3. Strengthening national capacities

4. Cooperation and coordination

5. Science and technology

6. Funding

34. It will be recalled that incorporation of disaster reduction guidelines developed by the Scientific and Technical Committee for the IDNDR into bilateral and multilateral development assistance programmes was one of the recommendations contained in the original International Framework of Action for the Decade (resolution 44/236). This area requires sustained attention in future.

D. Regional activities

35. A great increase of political awareness for natural disaster reduction has emerged during the process of regional and national preparation for the World Conference. In this respect, some of the regions of the world like the South Pacific and the CIS countries have come together on an informal group recognizing their specific problems and developing regional coordination which will continue to exist also after the World Conference. Information on the extent of regional preparations for the World Conference follows.

Africa and OAU

36. Africa has taken note of the General Assembly recommendations for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction at the highest level. The Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity endorsed in February 1994 a proposal for an African Common Position for the World Conference. It emphasized that disasters have seriously affected the socio-economic performance of the region and compounded the vicious circle poverty-environmental degradation-poverty. It recognized that existing strategies for post-disaster emergency and relief assistance do not take into

account the longer term costs of disasters in the form of increased unemployment, inflation and loss of foreign markets. Therefore an effective strategy for disaster management must follow a comprehensive medium and long-term development perspective.

37. Given the above background, strategies should allow Africa to take its responsibilities for emergency management and shift its focus to the countries of the region with a view to ensuring cost-effectiveness and the full integration of humanitarian assistance into national and regional strategies for environment and development. Disaster management policies should be conceived not only in the context of environment and development planning, but also of conflict resolution and sustainable development.

38. National inputs are needed for the formulation of an action plan based on the African Common position, through a series of sub-regional workshops. The OAU was requested to develop a policy document before the next conference of African Ministers for Economic Development and Planning. A temporary Task Force on Disaster Reduction was created in order to prepare for the World Conference.

Asia

39. At the request of the IDNDR Secretariat Asian Disaster Prevention Centre (ADPC) is to prepare and to organize a process to produce an issue paper reflecting the current status and future requirements for implementing the framework of IDNDR in the South and South-east Asian region, for the regional reporting at the World Conference.

40. For this purpose a working group, composed of senior Asian professionals, as well as of regional and international organizations, will be established.

41. The primary area of attention of the issue paper will be the SAARC countries of South Asia, the ASEAN countries of South-east Asia, and Vietnam. (China, Japan, and the South Pacific region will be reporting to the World Conference separately).

42. The issue paper will be presented to the Regional Meeting of the SAARC countries which will be held 28 February to 3 March 1994 in Delhi. This meeting will be asked to consider a common position for SAARC at the World Conference. ASEAN has also been approached

by the IDNDR Secretariat for consideration of the Asian report and programme.

The Caribbean

43. The approach adopted in the Caribbean was dictated by the special needs of the small Island states and their tendency to concentrate their efforts mostly on hurricanes.

44. A regional meeting was organized in Port of Spain, Trinidad by the Seismic Research Unit (SRU) of the University of West Indies with the support of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Organization of American States (OAS). The objectives of this meeting held around the World Disaster Day (October 1993) were to stimulate the participation of the scientific community in the preparation of the World Conference, stress the need to include earthquake reduction activities at a more prominent place in the agenda of the national committees. Among the results of the meeting, particularly worth mentioning is the priority given to the vulnerability analysis of critical structures such as hospital and schools. PAHO and OAS increased their cooperation in their respective area of responsibility.

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

45. A Meeting of the CIS countries in Bishkek, Kyrghyzstan, 13-18 December 1993, encouraged all the participating countries to join IDNDR and to report to the World Conference on their national activities for natural disaster reduction.

46. The national reports on disaster reduction activities revealed a high amount of experience and know-how concerning all of the wide range of hazards existing in this area, including technical and environmental hazards. Emphasize was made on the inclusion of technical hazards in the IDNDR activities in the region. Specific offers of assistance in respect to training were made by some of the participating countries.

47. The high frequency of natural hazards threatening the CIS countries as well as the increasing vulnerability to those because of political, economic and social reasons recognized by the participants, underlined the need for regional cooperation in disaster management.

48. Therefore, the meeting resulted in the establishment of a regional secretariat of the CIS countries to be hosted by EMERCOM of Russia. The agreement concerning the establishment of a regional coordination was signed by all the CIS countries and was the first of this kind. A follow-up meeting which will be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in March-April 1994, will discuss and finalize the report of the CIS countries to be presented at the World Conference. Although, until now only 5 CIS countries have officially joined IDNDR, it is expected that during the meeting in March the remaining countries will establish IDNDR National Committees and/or Focal Points.

Europe

49. In order to discuss individual and coordinated contributions of the EC countries to the objective of the Decade, a meeting of the National Committees and focal Points for the IDNDR in the countries of the European Community was convened in Brussels, 27-28 September 1993, with the support of ECHO, the European Community Humanitarian Office of the Commission of the EC.

50. The meeting noted the large difference between the level of activities of the various EC countries. The scope of IDNDR was understood in different ways from concentration on natural disaster reduction on the national territory to the assistance to developing countries. Therefore, a number of gaps at the national level have been identified at the meeting, whose correction should improve future national as well as regional activities.

51. The meeting concluded that an European IDNDR Working Group should be established to continue the dialogue initiated at the Brussels meeting. It will assist to liaise the National Committees and Focal Points with the Commission, in collaboration with the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade and with the IDNDR Secretariat. The first and most urgent task of this working group will be to develop an agenda for the adequate representation of the EC National Committees at the World Conference, including outlining a strategy for the second half of the Decade that will be presented and discussed at the Conference. (The full report is available at the IDNDR Secretariat).

Latin America

52. In Latin America, the active presence of an IDNDR regional Office has contributed to the preparation of the World Conference through activities at national level. A bottom-up approach from the national level towards the sub-regional level and later the regional (Latin American) level was adopted.

53. The regional IDNDR office and the Pan American Health Organization promoted the organization of national multidisciplinary workshops to stimulate the participation of all sectors and institutions in disaster reduction activities. The main output is a comprehensive intersectoral statement of priorities (position paper). These workshops took place in 11 countries with PAHO technical and financial support.

54. At a later stage, a sub-regional meeting was organized for the Andean Region (August, 1993 in Colombia). A central American workshop will be held in El Salvador (16-18 February 1994).

55. The preparation in Latin America will culminate at the Interamerican conference on 21-24 March in Cartagena, Colombia. This large conference co-sponsored by IDNDR, PAHO, OAS, Red Cross and many scientific or non-governmental organizations will finalize the preparation initiated at national level.

56. Among the conclusions most often reached in these meetings are the following:

- Need to strengthen the role and leadership of the developmental agencies rather than relying on the specialized mechanisms or institutions established for relief and response.

- Participation of the legislative bodies (parliaments) in this process. This recommendation resulted into a new regional

program aimed towards this audience being established by Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

South Pacific

57. A regional meeting of National Committees for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction of the South Pacific area and observers, was held in Vanuatu, 25-26 August 1993.

58. The meeting recognized that some countries of the region lacked the infrastructure and emergency management arrangements to be able to sustain active involvement in IDNDR activities. Where the opportunity presents, any country which is active in the IDNDR should assist in developing the awareness and involvement in IDNDR activities of other countries not so involved. In this respect the meeting noted the brief relating to the proposed UNDP South Pacific Disaster Reduction Programme and observed that it provides a

possibly sound vehicle for the enhancement of the disaster management capability of the South Pacific.

59. All of the participating countries stated the need for focal points for disaster education and awareness within the South Pacific region and that such focal points should be the UNDHA South Pacific Programme Office (SPPO) and the Australian IDNDR Secretariat.

60. The meeting agreed on the establishment of a working group. to be coordinated and supported by the Australian IDNDR Committee and the DHA-South Pacific Programme Office (SPPO), which assists National Committees in the preparation of the national reports as well as in the preparation of the Regional Report on IDNDR activities for the South Pacific Region. This regional report will be endorsed by the South Pacific Environment Programme (SPREP).

61. During the process of preparation for the World Conference the number of participating countries in IDNDR in the South Pacific has increased from 7 to the total of 11 National Committees and/or Focal Points for IDNDR. (The full report is available at the IDNDR Secretariat).

E. Sectoral preparations

62. From its outset the launching of the Decade has stimulated considerable interest from a variety of sectors of society, such as science, insurance and other business concerns, as well as the liberal professions. The theme of the IDNDR has been discussed

in many sectoral meetings and scientific congresses with the aim of identifying ways and means for participating in the overall effort for disaster reduction, both in vulnerable countries and internationally. For reasons of space it is not possible to provide the detailed information on all this activities, but it is available with the Secretariat.

F. Public Information and Promotion

63. The implementation of the Public Information Strategy repeatedly discussed and approved by the STC is proving to be problematic as its crucial importance in the context of the Decade is not fully perceived and resources have not been available. On the other hand, the IDNDR Newsletter STOP Disasters has successfully become the communication tool linking Decade participants world-wide, and a fifth language version, in Russian, is being negotiated; priority allocation of resources will be needed to sustain the newsletter, in view of budget constraints in

Italy.

64. It is evident at this juncture, almost 4 years after the beginning of the Decade, that the existence of a considerable potential for disaster reduction in the society vulnerable to hazards is actually known to relatively narrow circles of specialists, such as scientists and experts already involved in disaster prevention. Even officials responsible for disaster response and emergency relief have not been made fully aware of the progress that can be achieved by a change in the perception of priorities, by looking ahead to hazards which are essentially well known, assessing the level of risk incumbent upon concentrations of population and resources and taking preventive measures.

65. At this time a concentrated effort to promote disaster reduction is essential to the success of IDNDR. In each country Decade participants must reach out to other sectors of society, ranging from policy makers and economic planners to local officials and the vulnerable population itself. The time has come to explain, with the help of the press and broadcast, media as well as through education programmes in schools and in training courses, the gains that can be achieved through initiatives taken before disasters or emergencies strike and how the scientific knowledge achieved so far can provide concrete benefits to society as a whole, for instance, how a well publicised flood monitoring and alert system combined with local floods maps and population awareness can save lives and reduce economic damage.

66. The International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, the second Wednesday in October, has been observed over the past two years at national and international levels under themes which highlighted the link between disasters and development and the

need for protecting schools and hospitals against disasters. Information support has been provided by the Secretariat and the feedback received from National IDNDR Committees and regional and international organizations indicate the varied and innovative methods employed by Decade partners in observing the Day.

67. While there is a marked and increasing interest and involvement in Decade activities, a significant amount of work remains to be done to further highlight the advantages and potential which exists at all levels for disaster reduction. An information strategy which provides a framework for all Decade partners exists, and what remains is the allocation of corresponding resources and commitment in respect of the crucial importance which public awareness holds for the success of the Decade.

G. Demonstration Projects

68. IDNDR and Demonstration Projects have continued to be the object of the efforts of their promoters and participants, and there has been a degree of progress in obtaining financing, in an uneven way though. More attention is, however, needed in ensuring that projects involving activities in vulnerable countries be developed in conjunction with national development and disaster management programmes and institutions and mobilizing, to the largest possible extent, national scientific and technical resources.

69. Currently 36 projects (25 Demonstration Projects and 11 IDNDR) are being carried out by scientific and technical communities, UN agencies, or national research institutes. The area covered by these projects is much wider than it was in the beginning of this year.

70. In 1993, the following activities were observed by both the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) subcommittee and the Secretariat. Seventeen (17) projects have held thirty (30) meetings or workshops which were attended by more than five hundred persons from 112 nations, UN agencies and international scientific and technical communities. Twenty-one (21) publications such as books, proceedings, or brochures and a glossary on natural disaster have resulted from implementation of ten (10) projects. The contents of these publications exceed 3000 pages. Thirty-eight (38) training courses were attended by more than 400 trainees from 28 countries.

71. The following outcomes of project implementation are of particular note. Two regional workshops held as part of the IDNDR Project, World Seismic Safety Initiatives (WSSI) made such a strong impact on some participants that national committees for

earthquake disaster mitigation were newly created in their countries. The project, Global Seismic Hazard Assessment Programme (GSHAP), plays a role as a nucleus for collaborative implementation of most projects in the field of earthquake disaster. The project, Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP), which is in its fourth year of implementation, has developed a diversity of training materials including video films.

72. Despite of the above mentioned progress, both the STC subcommittee and the Secretariat suggest that the STC give serious consideration to the following problem: many project reports which have reached to the Secretariat complain of a lack of resources for implementing projects and ask for assistance to be made. For instance, the project on strengthening non-engineered structures has been in the difficulty since its inception, although the devastating Indian earthquake of 30 September has revealed clearly

the importance of this project.

IV. OUTCOME OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE

73. The objectives assigned to the Conference by the General Assembly will be instrumental for the mid-term review of the IDNDR to take place in 1994 and for charting a Programme of Action for the future. In view of the latitude of the ground to be covered and the importance of obtaining a policy oriented document that could guide international as well as national determinations on future disaster reduction actions, it is planned that there will be a final document of the Conference which could comprise a declaration of guiding principles for disaster reduction (the Yokohama declaration) and proposals for a plan of action for the future. Suggested contents received so far are being reviewed, and the main proposed are included in a draft outline for consideration by the Preparatory Committee (document A/CONF.172/PC/L.2). This draft could be considered as the starting points for a continuing process leading to its adoption by the Conference.

74. The final document of the Conference will incorporate the thrust of the presentations and discussions that will have taken place. It will draw largely from the contributions by the Main and Technical Committees. The final document of the Conference will be presented to ECOSOC and to the 49th session of the General Assembly.

V. CONCLUSION

75. The mandate laid down by the General Assembly for the Preparatory Committee calls for the transmission of a number of recommendations to the World Conference, which should include:

a) the Provisional Agenda of the Conference;

b) the Programme of Work and Structure of the Conference;

c) the Draft Rules of Procedure for the Conference.

d) the draft final document of the Conference.

76. The final document of the Conference with its components should allow the Conference to achieve the four objectives assigned to it by the General Assembly and provide the key contribution towards the mid term review of IDNDR, to be conducted later this year.